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**THE NEW JERSEY ITALIAN AND ITALIAN  
AMERICAN HERITAGE  
COMMISSION**



PILOT CURRICULUM PROGRAM PHASE II: 2005-2006

*Italian Heritage Curriculum: "The Universality of Italian Heritage"*

## Unit Five: Second & Third Grades

### "Romulus & Remus: Mythic Origins of Rome"

**Grades 2-3**

**Purpose:**

Students will be able to:

1. Explain the legendary origins of Rome
2. Explore sibling rivalry
3. Define myth as a genre of literature
4. Devise ways to avoid conflict and resolve potential problems

This lesson plan is designed for two 45-minute periods.

**Materials:**

- Internet access or copies of Internet documents

**Key Term:**

**Myth--** A traditional, typically ancient story dealing with supernatural beings, ancestors, or heroes that serves as a fundamental type in the worldview of a people, by explaining aspects of the natural world or by delineating the psychology, customs, or ideals of society.

**Theme:**

Today, the political capital of the Republic of Italy, the city of Rome is one of the world's most important ancient cities. Archeological exploration has determined that the earliest settlements in the city date from around 750 B.C., which makes the city of Rome over 2 thousand years old. Unlike the history of modern American cities, such as New York City, of which the dates and traditions of their founding are known, the establishment of Rome is shrouded in legends and speculation. The most prominent legend of Rome's founding involves the story of two brothers, supposedly raised by a wolf, who established the city and then fought each other.

According to one version of the legend, the brothers (named Romulus and Remus) were the sons of the Roman god of war, Mars. As infants, the brothers were abandoned on the banks of the Tiber River in Rome and left to die. Fortunately, they were found by a female wolf, who fed them with her milk and saved them. Later, a shepherd found the boys and took them home to raise them as his own children. The boys grew up to be strong and clever and decided to build a new city on the land where the shepherd had rescued them. Shortly after building the city, the brothers quarreled about who should rule. During the argument, Romulus killed Remus. Romulus then became the first king of this city which he named after himself.

In this lesson plan, students will examine the founding myth of ancient Rome. They will see why Roman society developed such as strong "family-centered" culture. Students will contrast stories of sibling rivalry in ancient Greece, ancient Israel, and ancient Ireland, to discover why sibling rivalry can be destructive. They will also examine ways to ease tensions and negotiate settlements.

For further background, teachers can read a brief account of **Romulus & Remus** at the website provided in

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the lesson plan:

### Activities:

- I. Initial Steps:
  - a. Have students write a quick paragraph explaining the origins of the United States. (Hopefully, they know something about the American Revolution or the Forth of July).
  - b. Have some of the students explain their answers, whether they are accurate or creative.
- II. Explain to students the word “Myth.”
  - a. Inform them that they are going to investigate the myth of the origins of the city of Rome.
- III. Explain to students that many cultures have stories to explain their beginnings:
  - a. Sometimes the stories are mixed with myths and legends, while sometimes they are more historical.
    - i. Even the birth of the American nation is rife with legend and myth.
  - b. The ancient Israelites explained the beginning of their people through the stories of the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and then Moses’ and the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt.
  - c. Moslems trace their beginnings to Ishmael, son of Abraham.
  - d. The ancient Irish told stories of how the Celtic sons of Mil: Emer Donn, Eremon, Ir, and Amergin left the Iberian Peninsula (modern Spain & Portugal) and conquered the island of Ireland.
  - e. Although the origins of America has been well documented, the popular story has been peppered with myth and embellishments, such as stories of Molly Pitcher, Betsy Ross, George Washington and the Cherry Tree, etc.
  - f. Explain to students that the mighty Roman Empire also had a story of its origin.
  - g. Have students read the story at: websites provided in lesson plan.
    - i. Pick a student to read the first piece (under the first drawings) aloud, while the class reads along.
      1. Ask students whether this part of the story was mythical, or true.
    - ii. Pick a student to read the second piece (under the second drawings) aloud, while the class reads along.
      1. Ask students whether this part of the story was mythical, or true.
    - iii. Pick a student to read the third piece (under the third drawings) aloud, while the class reads along.
    - iv. Pick a student to read the fourth piece (under the fourth drawings) aloud, while the class reads along.
      1. Ask students whether this part of the story was mythical, or true.
    - v. Pick a student to read the fifth piece (under the fifth drawings) aloud, while the class reads along.
      1. Ask students whether this part of the story was mythical, or true.
        1. *Tell students that in the Book of Genesis Cain killed his brother Abel, because Abel had given more pleasing sacrifices to God.*
        2. *In Genesis, Jacob deceived his Father, Isaac, and stole his brother, Esau’s birth rite and his blessing.*
        3. *In a Greek tragedy, the playwright, Sophocles, told in the play Antigone of how the brothers, Eteocles and Polyneices had agreed to share the rule of Thebes. Each brother would rule on alternating years. Eteocles ruled first, but refused to relinquish power after one year. Eventually, the brothers fought over the city, until both were dead.*
        4. *In ancient Irish mythology, two sons of Mil, Donn Eber and Eremon had defeated the native Tuatha Da Dannon in Ireland. Both brothers were going to fight over the kingship of Ireland. Their brother, Amergin the Bard, decided that Donn Eber’s family would receive Eremon’s inheritance and Eremon’s family would receive Eber’s inheritance. This way they would both work to help one another. Instead of adhering to Amergin’s decision, the*

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*brothers agreed to divide Ireland. Eremon took the north and  
Donn Eber took the south.*

- IV. Explain to students that this type of sibling rivalry is unacceptable today. In the ancient world the birthright and the father's inheritance was everything. There would be one ruler and the other siblings would be subservient.
- a. Tell the students to think of a time when they felt jealous over something their sibling, cousin, or a friend had received or had accomplished.
  - b. In a paragraph:
    - i. Explain the situation.
    - ii. Explain how the student reacted to the situation.
    - iii. Ask them to write a "rule" for themselves.
    - iv. Ask the students: "Whenever they feel jealousy, what will they do to avoid a confrontation or bad feelings between them and their sibling or friend because of jealousy?"